

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE
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JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE COMMISSION ISSUES
ORDER REMOVING JUDGE RICHARD W. STANFORD, JR., FROM OFFICE

The Commission on Judicial Performance has issued a decision and order removing Judge Richard W. Stanford, Jr., of the Orange County Superior Court from office. The Commission's determination becomes final in 30 days, subject to discretionary review by the California Supreme Court.

The commission ordered Judge Stanford removed from office for a pattern of diverting to his own court and acting on traffic tickets for friends and family over a five-year period. The judge's conduct included repeatedly engaging in prohibited ex parte communications, entering dispositions based on hearsay information from his wife, failing to recuse when there were obvious conflicts of interest, handling matters not assigned to his court, waiving almost all fees and fines without considering the facts of the offense, the driver's record or public safety and involving members of court staff in his wrongdoing, which adversely affected court staff. The commission found that the judge's actions constituted willful misconduct, the most serious type of judicial misconduct, noting that "The use of the power of judicial office to benefit a friend is the 'casebook example of willful misconduct.'" (*Inquiry Concerning Wasilenko* (2005) 49 Cal.4th CJP Supp. 26, 46 quoting from *McCullough v. Commission on Judicial Performance* (1989) 49 Cal.3d 186, 194.)

In deciding that the judge's conduct warranted removal from office, the commission stated that the judge's pattern of willful misconduct involving the abuse of judicial authority to benefit family and friends was one of the most egregious types of judicial misconduct, one which affronts the very essence of a fair and impartial judiciary. The judge's conduct was not isolated, demonstrated an inability to perform judicial functions in an even-handed manner and demonstrated a lack of integrity. The judge attempted to minimize his culpability by claiming that he did not realize that what he was doing was wrong, which the commission found did not demonstrate a true appreciation of the misconduct. "[W]e have determined that removal is necessary to assure the public that a two-track system of justice and the dispensation of special favors by judges have no place in this state. As we previously explained with respect to a similar

pattern of misconduct: “It is our duty to denounce the misconduct in no uncertain terms and to sanction it as the grave ethical violation that it is, in our best effort to ensure even-handed justice, starting at the very point of access to the judge. (*Wasilenko, supra*, 49 Cal.4th CJP Supp. at p. 51.) We remove Judge Stanford from office in order to fulfill our mandate to protect the public, enforce rigorous standards of judicial conduct, and maintain public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary and the even-handed administration of justice.”

The Decision and Order is available on the Commission’s Web site at www.cjp.ca.gov (under “Pending Cases – Press Releases and Documents” and “Public Discipline and Decisions – 1961 to Present”) and at the Commission’s office.

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The Commission is composed of three judges, two lawyers, and six public members. The Chairperson is the Hon. Judith D. McConnell of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, in San Diego, California. Hon. Frederick P. Horn was recused in this matter.

For further information about the Commission on Judicial Performance, see the commission’s Web site.